



SEQUOIA & KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

& SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST/GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

FALL GUIDE 2010



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Wild Discoveries

When September arrived this year, it carried a proud new title: National Wilderness Month. That's cause for celebration here, as over 93% of Sequoia and Kings Canyon are legally designated Wilderness. (And that only counts the surface acreage; miles of wild caves lie hidden in these mountains, too.)

This park is part of one of the most expansive stretches of protected wilderness in the country. Neighboring wilderness areas share boundaries with the park, creating a band of protected wild areas along the peaks and canyons of the Sierra Nevada.

Several recent discoveries remind us that, as we protect these lands, we are helping to protect the life that they sustain. The Sierran wilderness holds living treasures we thought were lost, and some that are just now being revealed:

In September, in the mountains north of these parks, an automated camera captured a rare Sierra Nevada red fox on film. These animals haven't been seen in that area for decades. Its genetics match samples from fox pelts taken before 1926 from the same area where it was photographed. Scientists believe, therefore, that it may be part of a small group that has survived locally yet remained out of sight.

A similar story can be told about the few-flowered woolly star. First identified in 1899 on the floor of Kings Canyon, it was last seen there in 1940, despite numerous searches. This summer, a



A recent rediscovery in the Sierra Nevada wilderness: the rare Sierra Nevada red fox. ©U.S. Forest Service.

botanist rediscovered two small groups of this lovely little plant.

Some life is coming to light for the very first time. Researchers have captured strange, dark-adapted insects and spiders in the wild caves of these parks. Recent analysis shows that thirty-seven species and four genera of these creatures are completely new to science.

It's particularly exciting that these life forms are living and reproducing in the wilds of the Sierra, not just passing through. Their definition for wilderness is *home*.

The rest of us *are* just passing through. The Wilderness Act of 1964 describes wilderness as a natural place "where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." It says that, in most cases, it takes an area of at least 5000 acres to make a wilderness. For legal title as Wilderness, lands must also provide "outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined

type of recreation." They may contain "ecological, geological, scientific, educational, scenic or historical value."

The 807,962 acres of wilderness in Sequoia and Kings Canyon meet this legal definition spectacularly. Whether you go by foot or by book, discover the meaning of this wilderness for yourself.

*Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look behind the Ranges -
Something lost behind the Ranges. Lost and waiting for you. Go!*

~Rudyard Kipling